



Sino-American Pharmaceutical Professionals Association – Connecticut

SAPA-CT & UConn School of Pharmacy 2015 1st Joint Scientific Symposium

-The Emergence of New Drug Modalities

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SAPA-CT & UConn School of Pharmacy have successfully organized the 1st Joint Scientific Symposium on Nov 1st, 2015 at the University of Connecticut. This workshop spotlighted the collaboration between academic institutes and CT pharmaceutical industries, emphasizing the emergence of new drug modalities.

Dr. James Halpert, Dean, School of Pharmacy, gave an open speech highly appraised the joint organizing efforts from SAPA-CT members and UConn School of Pharmacy staffs and students. Dr. Yongmei Li, the 2015-2016 President of SAPA-CT, stepped up and welcomed all the attendees. Dr. Li briefed the organization's history and thanked the support from SAPA-CT, UConn School of Pharmacy and AAPS UConn student volunteers. She reiterated the mission of the organization: to provide a platform for promoting pharmaceutical research and science, idea exchanging, networking, and career development (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Open speech and welcome by Dr. James Halpert, Dean, School of Pharmacy, UConn and Dr. Yongmei Li, President of SAPA-CT (2015-2016)

The podium presentation session was chaired by Dr. Liang Luo from Bristol-Myers Squibb Company and Dr. Xiaobo Zhong from School of Pharmacy, UConn (Fig. 2) and featured three distinguished speakers: Dr. Roy Haskell, Research Fellow, Pharmaceutical Candidates Optimization, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company; Dr. Diane Burgess, Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor of Pharmaceutics, School of Pharmacy, UConn; and Dr. Xiang Gao, Senior Director, Head of Pharmacometrics and Clinical Pharmacology, Alexion Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Three short talks were also selected from UConn graduate students and postdoctoral fellow: Derek Hargrove, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Dr. Chune Liu, Department of Physiology and Neurobiology, The Institute of Systems Genomics, and Chad Pope, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences (Fig 3).



Fig. 2. The presentation session was chaired by Dr. Liang Luo from Bristol-Myers Squibb Company and Dr. Xiaobo Zhong from the School of Pharmacy, UConn.



Fig. 3. The podium presentation session consisted of three invited lectures and three selected talks from graduate students and postdoctoral fellow.

Dr. Haskell’s talk titled “Breaking bad: finding & developing therapeutic interventions that move past the rule of 5”. He introduced new molecular entities with values outside the traditional developable range that are actively pursued by pharmaceutical industry. Dr. Burgess gave a presentation on “Drug development, performance, regulation, and e-health”. She addressed aspects of drug development, performance and regulation covering basic science aspects as well as a discussion of e-health applications. Dr. Gao gave a speech on “RNAi – a new molecular modality on the horizon for treatment of rare genetic liver diseases”. He gave a comprehensive introduction on RNA molecules (RNAi), a new molecular modality that can knock down the expression of disease-causing genes, and its application for genetic rare inherited diseases

involving the liver. Three UConn graduate students and postdoctoral fellow also presented their interesting works on nanoparticle activation in tumor spheroid model (Derek Hargrove), a novel Bcl2-Shp-LncRNA H19 in cholestatic liver fibrosis (Dr. Chune Liu), and long non-coding RNAs as new drug targets (Chad Pope). The presentation attracted many meeting attendees (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Audience of the symposium

The organizing committee added a poster session right after the symposium presentation (Fig. 5). Twenty posters were selected for exhibition. The poster session was a great success for students and industry colleagues to show their works and networking.



Fig. 5. The poster session

Three sponsor companies, including U-Pharm Laboratories LLC, Novoprotein, and Thermo Fisher, also presented their exhibition booths (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. The sponsor booths

The last session of the meeting on career development received positive engagement from the audience (Fig. 7). Personal experience to achieve career goals was shared from the following leaders: Dr. Roy Haskell; Dr. Diane J. Burgess; Dr. Xiang Gao; Dr. Donald Tweedie, Director of Non-clinical Drug Metabolism and Pharmacokinetics, Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals; and Dr. Li Wang, Professor of Physiology and Neurobiology, UConn. The five panelists used their personal experience to illustrate how to land their first jobs out of the graduate schools and what it took to be successful in academia or the pharmaceutical industry.



Fig. 7. Career development panel discussion was chaired by Dr. Xiuling Lu from the School of Pharmacy, UConn and Dr. Steven Yu from Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals. The panel members included Drs. Donald Tweedie, Roy Haskell, Diane Burgess, Li Wang, and Xiang Gao.

In the end, Dr. Shuanghua Hu, Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, gave final remarks and Young Scholar Awards to the winners of the short talks. Derek Hargrove’s talk on “Tumor-nanoparticle



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interaction of intraperitoneally delivered neutron activatable nanoparticles *in vivo* and in a 3D tumor spheroid model” won the first prize (Fig. 8).



1st Place, Derek Hargrove

2nd Place, Dr. Chune Liu

3rd Place, Chad Pope

Fig. 8. Young Scholar Awards chaired by Dr. Shuanghua Hu

This half-day scientific symposium has proven itself fruitful in many aspects: full registration of 100 attendees and many on waiting list, distinguished speakers from both academic institutions and local pharmaceutical companies with inspiring speeches on new modalities, new technologies, precious career coaching and networking opportunities for both graduate students, postdocs, and industrial colleagues.

The 1st joint scientific symposium was only made possible with supports from speakers, UConn School of Pharmacy, AAPS UConn student volunteers, and our dedicated SAPA-CT Executive Committee members (Fig 9). We want to thank all the leaderships and collaborators for their constructive suggestions. We look forward to future collaborations between UConn School of Pharmacy and SAPA-CT.



Fig. 9. SAPA-CT Executive Committee members, UConn faculty, invited speakers, and panel members

Photos were kindly provided by Drs. Xiaohui Mei and Xiaobo Zhong.